Advocacy and Other Business

As I conclude the third month of my term as president, I find myself spending a lot of time on advocacy efforts.

2020 is shaping up to be a year in which ATA focuses a great deal on state and national legislation affecting the translation and interpreting professions.

But not all proposed legislation has negative consequences for ATA members. H.R. 5339, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow’s Workforce Act, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Representative Abigail Davis Spanberger, would permit ATA members to use 529 tax-preferred savings accounts to pay for expenses related to becoming certified (e.g., practice tests, exam preparation, and costs) and maintaining certification (e.g., continuing education requirements such as professional development training and attendance at the Annual Conference). I encourage you to contact your representatives and senators to urge them to support this bill.

IT’S NOT ALL POLITICS

But don’t think legislative advocacy is the only thing ATA and I have been working on for the past three months. Planning is well underway for ATA’s 61st Annual Conference, to be held in Boston October 21–24. (For more of what ATA61 has in store, see ATA President-Elect Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo’s column on page 4 of this issue.) The Professional Development Committee continues to work on expanding and improving professional services that are exempt from the ABC Test requirement in AB 5. While well-intentioned, the proposed wording is very problematic and shows a lack of understanding of the translation and interpreting professions. A “clean” straightforward exemption for translators and interpreters remains the best solution to this problem. A victory in California will greatly facilitate obtaining similar exemptions in other states that pass strict versions of the ABC Test.

Through its membership in the Professional Certification Coalition, ATA is also monitoring state legislation regarding voluntary certification programs to ensure that they do not negatively impact ATA’s Certification Program.

2020 is shaping up to be a year in which ATA focuses a great deal on state and national legislation affecting the translation and interpreting professions.

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Boston, Here We Come!

Planning is in full swing for ATA’s 61st Annual Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, set to take place October 21–24 at the Westin Waterfront Boston.

For many of us, this is the event of the year—known for the high level of professional development opportunities and networking available to members and attendees. As one 2019 attendee said about her experience, “It’s just wonderful! And I go back home energized.”

For many of us, this is the event of the year—known for the high level of professional development opportunities and networking available to members and attendees.

After enjoying the sunny days and chilly evenings in Palm Springs at ATA60, I’ve heard from many of you that you’re even more excited to head to the historic city of Boston this year. I don’t think you’ll be disappointed!

From Harvard Square and Beacon Hill to Freedom Trail and Faneuil Hall Marketplace, every corner of Boston has something to enjoy. For those of us who are self-proclaimed “foodies,” Boston is best known for its wonderful seafood—make sure you try a lobster roll and a bowl of clam chowder while you’re in town. And lest we forget our linguistic roots, you can’t visit Boston without appreciating the beautiful Boston accent! ATA members in the Boston area are eager to welcome their colleagues. (For more information on the New England Translators Association, check out their website listed in the sidebar.)

We anticipate even more attendees at the 2020 conference than we had in New Orleans and Palm Springs, respectively. After reviewing the results of the Professional Development Survey we recently conducted for members, we were able to gauge the kinds of topics you would like to see at the conference. From there, we sent out the call for conference proposals, highlighting the topics that were especially requested as a way to solicit presentations in these areas and prioritize the content our members need most. Hopefully many of the requested topics and areas will be well represented at the Boston conference as a result of this effort.

ATA President Ted Wozniak and I recently returned from a site visit to the host hotel for ATA61. And while we were in Boston for the Annual Conference in 2011 for ATA52, this year’s conference will be held in a different part of the city. The Westin Waterfront Boston, a newly renovated hotel, is located in the Seaport District near South Boston. This is an exciting area of town that boasts a great restaurant scene within walking distance and sites like the New England Aquarium, Faneuil Hall Marketplace, and more. You can even arrive a day early to enjoy one of the Boston sightseeing trolley tours! Boston USA provides an official guide application for iPhone and Android users to find great deals, search the local events calendar, and purchase tickets to Boston attractions.

The Westin will house the majority of sessions, with just a handful of sessions and meetings taking place in the adjoining Boston Convention Center, a very short walk over the enclosed sky bridge. We’re planning some exciting new Advanced Skills and Training (AST) sessions for the Wednesday before the conference officially starts, and you’ll see tweaks and improvements to some of the evening events in an effort to make your conference an even greater experience and investment. We expect the room block at the Westin to fill rather quickly, so watch for the announcement to book your room soon! Registration for the Annual Conference will open in July.

It’s my sincere pleasure to be the conference organizer in my role as ATA president-elect. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions you have about the conference. See you in Boston! ☑️

What to Do and See in Boston

- **Boston Sightseeing Trolley Tours**
  https://www.trolleytours.com/boston

- **Boston USA**
  https://www.bostonusa.com/plan-your-trip/

- **Faneuil Hall Marketplace**
  https://faneuilhallmarketplace.com/

- **Fenway Park**
  https://www.mlb.com/redsox/

- **Freedom Trail**
  https://www.thefreedomtrail.org/tours

- **Harvard Square**
  https://www.harvardsquare.com/

- **New England Aquarium**
  https://www.neaq.org/

- **New England Translators Association**
  www.netaweb.org
development opportunities, including webinars and in-person events, in part driven by the recent Professional Development Survey in which members provided topics of interest to them. At ATA Headquarters, the new website is nearing completion and should debut in the near future. The Membership Committee continues to examine ways to increase the value of ATA membership, to reach and recruit new members, and retain current members. The Governance and Communications Committee is working on policies to increase transparency at ATA.

I had hoped to report on these developments and other outcomes from the recent Board of Directors meeting here, but my submission deadline requires that I include that report in my next column. Until next time.

NOTES

Board Meeting Highlights

The American Translators Association’s Board of Directors met February 8–9, 2020, in Charleston, South Carolina. The meeting followed the Board’s Annual Strategy Day.

The Annual Strategy Day allows the Board to discuss in-depth aspects of the Association and the translation and interpreting professions. Strategy Day is coordinated and led by ATA’s president-elect, who, by office, is the chair of the Governance and Communications Committee.

This year, President-Elect Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo guided the Board through a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results (SOAR) Analysis and discussion. (The Board’s top areas were advocacy, continuing education, and inclusivity/expanding membership.) Next, Treasurer John Milan led a discussion about the proposed Strategy Committee, specifically how it could advise the Board on its planning, the skills and experience committee members should have, and the importance of the committee’s independence to provide its insights.

The Board then looked at the future of the Annual Conference with a general discussion about the structure of the event, the audience, and locations. The Board also discussed possible revisions to ATA’s membership structure and categories.

Treasurer Milan closed the day’s activities by reviewing and explaining how Board members are expected to satisfy their fiduciary duties to ATA with respect to ATA’s financial and tax reporting.

Strategy Day discussions do not necessarily lead to concrete action plans, but they do serve as the foundation for working through the Board’s activities for the year.

Here are some highlights from the Board meeting.

Advocacy: President and Government Relations Committee Chair Ted Wozniak briefed the Board on ATA’s responses to California Assembly Bill 5 (independent contractor vs employee classifications) and the efforts to get an exemption for translators and interpreters. President Wozniak shared with the Board other draft federal and state legislation that the committee is monitoring. Related, the Board approved renaming the Government Relations Committee the Advocacy Committee.

Strategy Committee: The Board approved establishing a Strategy Committee and appointing Treasurer John Milan as chair. The committee will focus on trends and issues affecting translators and interpreters and what they mean for the Association.

Membership: The Board reviewed the Membership Committee’s updated Membership Roadmap that looks at ways to improve membership retention and target new members. President-Elect Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo is the chair of the Membership Committee.

Conflict of Interest Policy: The Board approved a Conflict of Interest Policy for Board members, committee chairs, and division administrators. These key volunteers must submit a conflict of interest form each year.

Nominating and Leadership Development Committee Appointment Approved: The Board approved the appointment of the members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. They are Past President David Rumsey (chair), Lucy Gunderson, Yolanda Secos, David Stephenson (Certification Committee chair), and Izumi Suzuki. The committee reviews and selects the slate of candidates for the elections each fall. This year, we have elections for three directors.

Finance and Audit Committee: The Board approved the appointment of Robin Bonthrone to the Finance and Audit Committee. Robin brings a strong finance and accounting background to the committee.

The Board meeting summary is posted online. The minutes will be posted once they are approved at the next Board meeting. Past meeting summaries and minutes are also posted online at www.atanet.org/membership/minutes.php. The next Board meeting is set for April 18–19, 2020, in Alexandria, Virginia. As always, the meeting is open to all members, and members are encouraged to attend.
Assembly Bill 5: What Now?

Do not underestimate the power of your vote. Politicians depend on you to stay in office. Nothing can equal the pressure individual translators and interpreters can bring to bear on their elected officials.

Since California’s Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5) went into effect January 1, an increasing number of freelance translators and interpreters report that they are struggling to stay in business. Several other states are considering similar legislation.

In September, ATA joined forces with other translator and interpreter organizations to request an exemption from AB 5 for translators and interpreters. The Association is now actively supporting the Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California to continue advocating for the exemption. ATA also issued a statement in response to California Senate Bill 875, which proposes including translators and interpreters in the list of professional services that are exempt from the ABC Test requirement in AB 5.

What can you do? Do not underestimate the power of your vote. Politicians depend on you to stay in office. Nothing can equal the pressure individual translators and interpreters can bring to bear on their elected officials.

Get involved in standing up for our profession! Start below with this how-to advocacy handout, a step-by-step action plan showing you how to present your case to state lawmakers. The information includes how to find your representatives and sample talking points to use in letters or conversations with legislators.

Get out there! Remember, you have the power. Use it!

Ted R. Wozniak
President, American Translators Association

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MANDATORY EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION LEGISLATION IN MY STATE?

Now is the time to contact your state legislators and demand an exemption for interpreters and translators. Constituent-driven advocacy is how ordinary citizens hold lawmakers accountable to their constituents. Your active involvement with the lawmakers who work for you is necessary to protect your freedom to work as an independent contractor. By taking informed, strategic action in your district and state capital, you can make the policy process yield the results you need to protect the integrity of our professions, the survival of our operations, and the communities we serve.

WHAT STEPS SHOULD I TAKE?

Communicate with and visit your lawmakers by following the steps below.

1. Look up the title/designation of the mandatory employee classification legislation in your state. See the section on “Finding Existing or Proposed Legislation on Worker Classification” on page 8 to learn how and where to find this information.

2. Look up your state lawmakers and their local district offices here: https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator.

   ▪ Enter your address in the search bar, and your elected representative to the lower and upper chambers of your state legislature will be displayed. Open each link in a new window/tab to view and copy the contact information for your state representative, assemblyperson, delegate, or senator. Make a note of their email address, phone number, and the location of their local office.

   ▪ Your representative and senator need to hear from you. They and their staff can do their job best when they understand what affects you most.

3. Call and arrange a meeting with your lawmakers. Fridays are often the best days because lawmakers are typically in their local district offices.
Depending on your representative’s schedule, you may not meet them personally but with a legislative aide instead. If so, treat them just as you would your representative. These aides are often the “gatekeepers” and have a lot of influence on their bosses. If an in-person meeting is not possible/practical, send them an email expressing your concerns and asking them to take specific actions.

4. Before you go, hone your three-part message:

- **Tell your story** about who you are and how your profession serves the community. Be prepared to explain how the translation and interpreting industry and professions work, how many agencies you work for during a year, and why the independent contractor/agency model works best for you and for agencies and end clients. Tell them if you’ve received notifications from agencies informing you that they will no longer work with you (or only if you incorporate).

- **Explain how and why** you are or will be harmed without an explicit exemption from the scope of mandatory classification, such as loss of a Simplified Employment Pension-IRA retirement option or previously fully deductible business deductions that would now be limited as an employee’s “unreimbursed business expenses.”

- **Ask your lawmakers** what they will do to address this need immediately.

5. Finally, report back to ATA about your experience. Please send an email summarizing your meeting and the reaction of your representatives to Advocacy@atanet.org.

Thank you for taking action to protect our professions and our livelihoods.

**FINDING EXISTING OR PROPOSED LEGISLATION ON WORKER CLASSIFICATION**

A Department of Labor list of 2019 classification schemes used to determine unemployment insurance in each state has been posted on ATA’s website. (See the link for “Determination Employer-Employee Relationship” at the end of this article.)

The situation is changing rapidly as legislatures are moving quickly to follow California’s lead. The information in this Department of Labor document may already be out of date, or there may be legislative proposals to change the scheme. Use the tips below to determine the state of affairs in your state.

1. Try using Google. Search for “mandatory employee classification” plus your state.

2. Use www.WorkerClassification.com. Click on State Resources, then your state, to see existing and/or proposed legislation and news on worker classification. Note that different legislation and classification tests may apply for different purposes (e.g., unemployment insurance and workers’ compensation). California AB 5 and similar legislation mandates uniform application of the ABC Test for most purposes.

3. Use www.Congress.gov to find the website for your state legislature. Then use the search function to browse for pending legislation with keywords such as “worker classification,” “independent contractors,” or “ABC Test.”

**SAMPLE TALKING POINTS FOR CONVERSATIONS OR LETTERS TO LEGISLATORS (MAY BE ADAPTED INTO A CALL SCRIPT)**

1. **Vulnerable populations will suffer the most from an ABC Test without a language industry exemption.** With at least 500 languages spoken in the U.S., the potential impact to vulnerable populations would be catastrophic. Should there be a significant reduction in the availability of language services, in particular on the interpreting side, and if companies are forced into the employee model, they will be much less likely to contract people to work in rare...
languages, since the need for them is much more infrequent than the more common languages. Immigrants and refugees would have more difficulty in receiving services at hospitals, schools, or in legal settings. Rising costs will put seemingly unrelated sectors at risk of violating federal law.

As you may know, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating based on national origin by, among other things, failing to provide meaningful access to individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP). This is serious considering that countless industries, including health care, law enforcement, and finance, which receive federal dollars, rely on language companies to comply with language access laws and facilitate best practices. By dismantling the language industry's independent contractor model, an ABC Test will have unintended consequences for seemingly unrelated industries as they scramble to fill the void.

2. **Without a language exemption, an ABC Test is unfair to businesses and workers.** Given all of the costs and administrative requirements associated with employees, an ABC Test places our industry at a competitive disadvantage. If a worker is classified as an employee, the employer suddenly bears the responsibility of 1) paying Social Security and payroll taxes, 2) unemployment insurance taxes and state employment taxes, 3) providing workers’ compensation insurance, and 4) navigating state and federal statutes governing the wages, hours, and working conditions of employees. Translators and interpreters themselves are educated, highly experienced, highly trained, and often certified individuals performing highly specialized and professional services, who average $40/hour in the private marketplace.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH A UNITED FRONT**

I strongly encourage our members to support the efforts for an exemption and to contact their state representatives and senators. Just as the passage of AB 5 in California is serving as a model for other states, gaining an exemption in California will also serve as a model and make it easier for professional translators and interpreters to be exempt from being classified as “gig economy” workers in other states. We can only protect our profession by showing a united front and through grassroots efforts to educate our state legislators.

**NOTES**

IT'S MORE THAN CREDIBILITY—
IT'S BEST PRACTICE
Obviously, we don’t have a crystal ball to peer into the future, but there’s plenty of proof to suggest that decoupling is the right way forward.

The biggest argument against decoupling appears to be the notion that there is no evidence that other credentials have increased credibility after a membership requirement was removed. Here’s the thing: in the association world, best practice is (and has been) to separate credentialing from membership. A membership requirement is the exception rather than the rule. What’s more, requiring membership has not been shown to add value to a credential. It’s clear that the vast majority of professional associations see greater value in a “decoupled” credential.

IT'S MORE THAN LOGICAL—
IT'S THE RIGHT STEP FORWARD
Organizations constantly have to weigh the pros and cons of the status quo versus moving in a new direction. Although it may feel safer to leave things the way they are, associations that fail to adapt become

Discussion on Opening ATA’s Exam to Nonmembers

The November/December issue included an announcement that the Board had voted to postpone a decision to open ATA’s certification exam to nonmembers. This was followed by the answers to some frequently asked questions concerning the issues involved (http://bit.ly/FAQ-Decoupling). Here is another response we received after members were encouraged to submit their feedback.

But don’t let the conversation stop here! As an ATA member, your voice is important, so please send us your comments.

Why ATA Should Open the Certification Exam to All Professional Translators
By Matt Baird, CT
ATA-certified (German>English)
Niederkassel, Germany
I’ve been attending ATA Board meetings at ATA’s Annual Conference for years.

Why? Well, it began with simple curiosity. I wanted to understand how our Association works. As a volunteer, I was a small cog in ATA’s “engine room,” but I wanted to see who was steering the ship.

Why am I telling you this? Because it was at one of those meetings when I first heard the Board discuss the issue of opening ATA’s certification exam to nonmembers and how to keep the membership informed about it. Since then I’ve followed the issue fairly closely, including reading related articles in this very publication and discussing it with Board members. ATA also presented a free webinar on the subject in October.1

Why am I so interested in “decoupling”? Because I’m excited to see our Association take steps aimed at expanding our reach beyond the current membership. Decoupling is about ATA’s vision for the future—a future in which ATA becomes the recognized credentialing body for the entire translation profession—and I applaud the Board for having the courage to pursue this initiative.
stagnant and irrelevant. Our profession is changing rapidly. Decoupling is not only the logical step forward, it’s the right one. By removing the membership requirement, ATA greatly expands the pool of translators eligible to take the exam. We’re creating conditions to enable more participation. The only way we’ll ever know if nonmembers will choose to do so is by actually allowing them to make that choice.

What’s more, by separating membership from the credential, ATA makes it clear that we are the recognized certifying body for the entire profession, not just for people who choose to be members. This will inevitably increase our Association’s stature.

IT’S MORE THAN OPENING UP THE EXAM—IT’S ABOUT REMOVING BARRIERS

The logic behind decoupling actually doesn’t stop there. We know that people are interested in becoming ATA-certified and that the hurdle of membership is real.

Case in point: ATA’s Government Division has confirmed something ATA already knew, though until recently only anecdotally. Many government employees, including military members, can gain approval and receive funding to attain civilian certifications relevant to their principal occupations. The Department of Defense Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) program is one example. ATAs certification exam is not eligible to participate because the program stipulates that the credentialing body may not require membership.

That program is only the tip of the iceberg. Although ATA can’t precisely predict demand for the certification exam, we know it is there and it is real.

SPEAKING OF DEMAND...

One of the opinion pieces published in the January/February 2020 issue of The ATA Chronicle cited a ProZ poll from December 2019, but very relevant results were ignored. Take a closer look: 38% of those who participated said they would want to take ATA’s certification exam if it was open to nonmembers. Another 20% said “maybe.” That’s nearly 60%!

Obviously, we can’t judge the accuracy of this poll, but ProZ is an international community of translators so we can’t deny that it indicates considerable interest in our credential around the world.

IT’S MORE THAN REPORTS AND BYLAWS—IT’S ABOUT DUE DILIGENCE

The Hamm Report has been named repeatedly in this debate. That’s because it started our Association down this path. But this report is not—and never has been—the decoupling bible. Whether or not the Board chose to follow all of the report’s recommendations is beside the point. The finding that an independent credential will be a more credible credential hasn’t changed.

ATA’s Bylaws have also been hijacked, first by the claim that the Board wasn’t authorized to make this move. Indeed, there was concern about this issue, which is why the Board consulted with ATAs legal counsel, received a favorable legal response, and decided to move ahead. Now that decoupling has been postponed and the Board has proposed an amendment to make it clear in the Bylaws that taking the certification exam is not an exclusive member right, the Bylaws are once again being used to spread misinformation. Let’s be clear: the amendment will not remove any ATA member’s right to take the certification exam and become ATA-certified as stated in the opinion pieces published in the January/February 2020 issue of this publication. It extends the right to all translators in our profession to sit for the exam, and if they pass, become ATA-certified. To say otherwise is false and misleading.

The fact is that the Board has done its due diligence. Our Association’s finances have been reviewed, structures are in place, and the Certification Committee is ready to go. It’s time to do this, and I urge every voting member to vote “yes” on the amendment.

Obviously we can’t see beyond the horizon, but I’ve watched our ship’s officers carefully plot this course and I believe it’s the right one. Considering that some 75% of ATAs current members are not certified, it seems that most of us—including me, a member since 2000 and only certified since 2017—understand that the value of ATA membership goes way beyond certification. If we open ATAs certification exam to all professional translators, we will set sail on a journey that could take our credential—and our Association—to the next level.

NOTES


We want to hear from you!

Members are encouraged to submit their opinions, both pro and con, regarding opening ATA’s certification exam to nonmembers (also referred to as decoupling) for publication in The ATA Chronicle. While it may not be possible to print all submissions, equal space will be provided for members to present views on both sides of the issue. Please send to jeff@atanet.org.

Note: In keeping with standard ATA editorial policy, submissions must include the author’s name, which will be published. Anonymous submissions will not be accepted for publication.
ATA at “Protect Translators. Protect Interpreters. Protect the World.”: A Panel Discussion at the United Nations

On December 11, 2019, the Permanent Missions of Spain and the Republic of Fiji to the United Nations, together with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), hosted a panel discussion on the urgent need for enhanced legal and physical protection for translators and interpreters in high-risk settings. The event was co-organized on behalf of the world language community by Red T, a nonprofit advocating for laws and policies that promote the safety of linguists at risk.

For the first time, the occasion brought together not only representatives from the major translator/interpreter (T&I) associations across the globe, but prominent humanitarian organizations whose support Red T was able to secure, including PEN International, Amnesty International’s Language Resource Centre, and the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP). In addition to ATA, the other T&I associations represented were the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters, International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies, International Federation of Translators, and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters.

RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

In addition to discussing steps for mitigating risks and vulnerabilities, the panel also focused on what can be done to help translators and interpreters in conflict zones gain the international recognition and protection they deserve. The impressive list of panelists included:

- María Bassols, ambassador and deputy permanent representative, Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations
- Bill Miller, director of regional operations of UNDSS
- Maya Hess, founder and chief executive officer of Red T
- Betsy Fisher, director of strategy at IRAP
- Lucio Bagnulo, head of translation at Amnesty International’s Language Resource Centre
- Simona Škrabec, chair of PEN International’s Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee
- Caroline Decroix, vice president of the Association des interprètes et auxiliaires afghans de l’Armée Française
- Abdul Qaiyoum Najbullah Habibi, a conflict-zone interpreter
- Moderator: Linda Fitchett, chair of AIIC’s Conflict Zone Interpreter Project

The precursor to the panel discussion was a roundtable held at the UN in April 2018, which explored the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by translators and interpreters working in conflict situations.

In her opening remarks, Moderator Linda Fitchett expressed the hope that the UN will move toward an international response to address the need for protecting translators and interpreters in conflict zones.

Ambassador Maria Bassols noted that Spain, a staunch supporter of a broad humanitarian agenda, believes that translators and interpreters play a critical role in international relations and enhance knowledge within the international community. The big question, though, is how to fit the issue of protection for this group into the UN agenda. While pointing out that visa programs are national programs run by sovereign states, Bassols also observed this does not mean that international criteria cannot guide these policies. She stressed, however, that there is a lack of information about the numbers involved and that more solid data is needed to take any further steps within the UN. Such steps could include the establishment of a UN working group or “group of friends” (an informal group of states formed to support the peacemaking of the UN), and even a resolution, although this last measure would require tremendous effort.

UNDSS Director Bill Miller, whose department protects people who “require extraordinary protection in the service of others,” explained that 44 areas around the world are
now classified as high risk and above, and that translators and interpreters are key in helping bridge the gap of misunderstanding behind the social and nativist drivers that create high-risk areas.

Translators and interpreters play a critical role in international relations and enhance knowledge within the international community. The big question, though, is how to fit the issue of protection for this group into the UN agenda.

Maya Hess then expanded on the fact that T&I protection is virtually absent in the current international legal regime, and that it can only be inferred. However, Hess stated that “ample and gruesome evidence has shown that inferential rights are not sufficient, especially since linguists affiliated with troops, humanitarian organizations, and the media often operate on the frontlines and in other violent settings.” She pointed out that this lack of protection is further compounded by “the diminishing relevance and protective power of the Geneva Conventions due to changes in the traditional model of warfare,” including “the growing tendency to outsource wars to private defense contractors whose profit motives supersede interpreter welfare.” To address these factors, Hess proposed various solutions, including:

- Establishing a UN working group focused on this thematic.
- Appointing a special rapporteur who would investigate and draft a report on the scope of the issue.
- Drafting a document similar or iterative to the Montreux Document, which outlines applicable law and best practices for private military and security companies in war zones.
- Proposing a UN resolution that would articulate T&I rights and establish a normative framework for future protection. Hess noted that such a resolution would shift the paradigm of how conflict-zone linguists are perceived and treated—a shift that, in turn, would save lives.

PROTECTING OUR LINGUISTS
IRAP Director of Strategy Betsy Fisher addressed interpreter safety and offered some important statistics. For instance, she noted that 216 documented interpreters have been killed in Iraq. Family members not only face direct, personal, and credible death threats from those in their local communities, but are also seen as security threats by their employers. In one case, a contract interpreter placed a call to an insurgent at the direction of his employer and was subsequently suspected by his employer of having misplaced loyalties, specifically because of this phone call.

After noting that relocation programs are rife with backlogs, delays, and inexplicable red tape and essentially amount to merely remedial measures, Fisher described specific steps that can be taken in conflict zones to ensure the safety of translators and interpreters. For example, occupying forces must find ways to protect the identities of linguists, including:

- Providing on-base housing so that linguists cannot be identified on their way to work.
- Allowing linguists to wear masks, use pseudonyms, and relocate within the country.
- Keeping accurate information about who has worked for them.

Next, Simona Škrabec spoke about PEN International’s efforts to protect and relocate translators living and working in war zones and other high-risk settings. Škrabec noted that PEN’s main focus is freedom of expression and that linguists, who serve as “pillars of peace and mutual understanding,” are especially vulnerable and exposed by virtue of their abilities. Some of the translators PEN International has helped resettle include:

- Mohammad Habeeb, one of the most prominent translators in Syria, who was imprisoned for nine years due to his criticism of human rights violations committed by the al-Assad regime.
- Ashur Etwebi, a well-known Libyan poet, novelist, and translator, who was forced to leave his home after an attack by militia and resettle in Trondheim, Norway.
- Amani Lazar, a translator and writer from Syria, who was in a particularly vulnerable position as a woman in a war-torn area close to ISIS-held territory.

Lucio Bagnulo, head of translation at Amnesty International’s Language Resource Centre, also spoke about the idea that freedom of expression cannot exist without translators and interpreters. After observing that language enables Amnesty International to do its work and that the importance of translation and interpreting cannot be overstated, he noted that the international community still does not have access to an instrument that provides translators and interpreters with protection at the international level. He similarly highlighted the need to provide support to translators and interpreters who work for non-governmental organizations, noting that these linguists face as much risk as those employed by occupying forces.
The hope is the UN will move toward an international response to address the need for protecting translators and interpreters in conflict zones.

French attorney Caroline Decroix described her battle with the French government to protect Afghan interpreters who worked for the French army. The French government was in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014 and employed approximately 800 Afghan nationals, largely as interpreters under fixed-term contracts. As the French forces started to withdraw in 2012, several criteria were introduced for relocating these linguists to France, including assessing the threat level to the person concerned, the quality of services rendered, and the ability to integrate into French society. Under these criteria, only 73 people were accepted, and under revised criteria submitted three years later, only 100 more were accepted. In the fall of 2018, 51 additional families were admitted to France under a third procedure. There are a number of cases still pending, which points to the need for a harmonized response from the UN, since selection criteria for relocation vary from one country to another and create inequality within the interpreter community.

Finally, the panel heard from Abdul Qaiyoum Najbullah via video recording. Najbullah worked for the U.S. and Canadian armed forces from late 2007 to 2013. He took on this work because he saw it as a way to provide for his family while helping bring peace to his homeland. In 2010, however, his parents were murdered due to his collaboration with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and he was forced to flee. He paid a human trafficker to take him to Germany, a journey that lasted over seven months and at times involved greater risk than working for ISAF in Afghanistan. The rest of his story is best told in his own words:

“After arriving in Germany, I found one of my Canadian team members I worked with in Afghanistan. I was facing deportation from Germany to Austria and Hungary because of the Dublin Treaty and asked him for help. He promised that he would take me to Canada. After that, Joe Warmington, a journalist from the Toronto Sun, started writing articles about me. Red T read my story, got involved, and helped me. I was stuck without money in a refugee camp in southern Germany and needed to get to the Canadian Embassy in Berlin for a visa. Red T contacted the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators and asked them to bring me to my visa interview. Together with Joe Warmington, they kept my case in the news and on social media. All this worked—I got my visa and landed in Canada on April 15, 2016.”

**THE NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE**

The panel concluded with additional contributions from policy experts and a lively discussion. The overall message to attending member states was, to use Hess’ words: “The time has come for an international response to what is an international problem, and we call on the UN to firmly place the protection of linguists on its Protection-of-Civilians agenda.”

**NOTES**

1. To learn more about Red-T, visit www.red-t.org.
3. The Montreux Document is the result of an international process launched by the government of Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It’s an intergovernmental document intended to promote respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law whenever private military and security companies are present in armed conflicts. It was ratified in Montreux, Switzerland, in September 2008. For more information, see http://bit.ly/Montreux-Document.
Translation and Emotions: Keys for Effective Online Instruction and Collaboration

Emotional aspects in learning processes have been considered (at best) of secondary importance, but they’re essential for any learning to take place.

Today, it’s nearly impossible to think about producing a high-quality professional translation without access to online resources, both passive (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, and reference material) and interactive (e.g., discussion forums, chat rooms, and professional groups). It’s increasingly common for translation professionals to conduct their work remotely and collaboratively. This makes it completely natural and effective for future translators to be trained in surroundings similar to those in which they will practice their profession. This trend is reflected in the growth of online translator training programs, the demand for which is expected to increase. However, with the rise of online training options, there’s a concern that we’re losing a key element that’s important to a future translator’s success: fostering relationships through direct human contact.

Interaction with project managers, colleagues, clients, reviewers, editors, and other professionals, who form part of the constellation of direct professional contacts of any translator, is a crucial aspect of the translation trade. A translator’s professional success depends to a great extent on the quality of these relationships. At the same time, interaction is also an integral part of any learning process, and positive relationships with the instructor and other students are fundamental to learning. For many students, not having enough direct contact with instructors and peers is among the biggest challenges of online training. But how do we compensate for the lack of direct human interaction in online training courses?

Since virtual classes lack physical presence and interaction, feelings of isolation and frustration on the part of students are a frequent problem.

There’s a growing awareness of the essential role that emotions play in many cognitive processes, including the two that are central for successful completion of translation tasks: decision-making and problem-solving. Affective aspects in learning processes have been considered (at best) of secondary importance, but they’re essential for any learning to take place. In addition, “emotions and teamwork have as much relevance for effective learning as the development of mental skills and individualized study.” As mentioned previously, since virtual classes lack physical presence and interaction, feelings of isolation and frustration on the part of students are a frequent problem.

As educators, we should look for didactic strategies in the socio-affective domain to create an environment that helps students avoid negative emotions, not only in terms of the relationship of the student with the study material, but also in terms of collaboration with fellow students and the instructor. Here I’ll discuss possible ways of effectively using social and affective strategies that we’ve studied and implemented in our own instruction within the Translation Certificate program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. We hope that other translation instructors can...
incorporate these strategies in their virtual classrooms successfully. These strategies are also transferable to a professional virtual work environment.

**CREATING COMMUNICATIVE PROXIMITY**

Socio-affective strategies involve stimulating learning through establishing a level of empathy between the student and instructor. This can be done in a variety of ways.

**Enhancing the Instructor's Social Presence:** For students to feel the instructor's presence, the instructor has to be “visible,” which in a virtual environment usually requires some type of action. Technology allows the instructor to create what Rebecca DiVerniero (a lecturer in the Communication Studies Department at Christopher Newport University) and Angela Hosek (the director of Emerson College’s Communication 100 program) call “a dialogical atmosphere.” Three ways in which computer-mediated communication can help develop this atmosphere include:

- **Increased effectiveness in day-to-day communication.** The availability of electronic media allows the instructor to respond and initiate conversations quickly and regularly.
- **An increased perception of the instructor's availability on the part of the students.** Communication outside the traditional schedule of a face-to-face course creates a sensation of constant attention and contact.
- **Increased opportunities for shy students, who might not feel comfortable in an open classroom forum, to speak to the instructor and ask questions or express doubts.**

An instructor might also choose to create their own social presence by:

- **Focusing discussions on specific problems.** Donald Kiraly, who taught in the School of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies at Johannes Gutenberg-Universitat Mainz in Germany, calls this appropriation interpretation and reformulation of students’ ideas. 
- **Including additional information from external sources.**
- **Scheduling synchronous activities (virtual meetings).**

Students in synchronous courses usually rate the instructor's presence higher. Synchronous virtual meetings also emphasize the existence and identity of the group and its members in a more tangible way. In many cases, these meetings are the only opportunity for students to have a real-time conversation with their classmates and the instructor. Therefore, they play a prominent role in the socio-affective well-being of the class. However, students who are unable to participate in a real-time meeting (due to time zone differences, work, or family responsibilities, etc.) can feel left out. Therefore, it’s important to organize synchronous meetings at different times to give everyone the possibility to participate in the discussion at least once.

**Creating Communicative Proximity:** Research in the field of communication provides ways for the instructor to create a sense of psychological closeness or communicative proximity in a virtual classroom by means of physical and verbal behaviors that reduce the psychological and physical distance between individuals. In a traditional classroom environment, physical behaviors include eye contact, smiling, and leaning in during conversations with students. Students who notice such behavior on the part of their instructor tend to report feeling more motivated and perceive their instructor as more reliable.

In order to create such proximity in a virtual class, the instructor can use:

- **Video recordings so as to include the gestural components of language, such as the feeling of a direct gaze.** Such an effect can be achieved by filming the instructor in an informal environment while they look directly at the camera. A smile and open gestures can also shorten the
psychological distance between the instructor and students.

- Voice recordings, since being able to hear the instructor's voice makes students feel more connected and helps to humanize the virtual learning experience. Recordings reinforce the presence of an instructor in a virtual classroom. Podcasts can also be very effective in a virtual course, as they help reduce students' feelings of isolation and promote a social presence.

- More visual elements such as colors, images, and photographs of the instructor in an academic environment that emphasize their expressiveness, accessibility, and dedication.

BUILDING A SHARED COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Discussion Forums: Online discussion forums help reduce students' sense of isolation and provide a space for sharing achievements, fears, and frustrations about the course in general or about a particular activity, thus creating a sense of community. For the forum to become the center of the community of practice, instructors might:

- Provide specific guidelines on the use of the forum, such as instructions to:
  - Address others by name.
  - Justify their opinions and expand general statements.
  - Always treat others with respect, especially when expressing an opposing opinion.
  - Remember that in an online course, relationships with others are built through language, so the details of the communication in the forums must be handled carefully.
  - Quote or reference other students' ideas.
  - Read all the comments before adding one's own so as to contribute positively to the discussion and avoid the repetition of ideas already expressed.

- Build discussions around students' own interests, concerns, and experiences.

- Recognize and reinforce student contributions, identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and seek a way to achieve consensus, learning, and understanding.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the discussion process. Instructors themselves must model the form of communication desired in the forum. They should emphasize that their opinion isn't the only correct one. This will encourage students to offer their own opinions and not just try to guess the answer that the instructor wants to hear.

Peer Review: Peer review and mentoring activities are very effective in improving both group dynamics and each student's translation strategies and techniques. They allow students to reflect on their own translation process, learn different ways to solve translation problems, participate in the creation of shared knowledge, and as a result, create a community of practice.

Interaction is an integral part of any learning process, and positive relationships with the instructor and with other students are fundamental for learning.

For the peer review to be effective, it's recommended that the instructor:

- Explain the benefits of peer review and feedback to students;

- Provide students with an adapted version of the ATA Certification Program's Framework for Standardized Error Marking as a basis for peer evaluation. This practice will help them reflect on the process and product of their own (and others') translation work. At the same time, it will bring learning closer to the standards of professional translation.

PROMOTING PRODUCTIVE COLLABORATION

Instructor's Role: The instructor is essential in the creation of a productive, satisfactory, and genuine collaboration for students in a virtual class. The instructor should monitor and evaluate the collaborative processes used and provide help, advice, and tools. To promote effective collaboration, it's suggested that the instructor:

- Create the work groups carefully. It's preferable to organize small groups (three to four students), taking into account the primary variables in student background (such as dominant language, specific areas of prior knowledge, and expertise with technology).

- Create fixed roles within the group. It's advisable for each participant to perform in a fixed role and assume responsibilities within the group. A prior discussion of such roles can help avoid social laziness, or the situation in which some students let others do the work. If this is noticed, the instructor can make "a diplomatic intervention."

- Prior to the activity, teach students the essential rules for effective collaborative work and follow up on students' success in collaboration after each group activity. Many humorous videos on collaboration practices and teamwork that can be found on YouTube could help foster a more effective team-member effort.

- Set clear instructions regarding deadlines and the work to be completed.

Positive Interdependence: As Juan Antonio Prieto-Velasco and Adrián Fuentes-Luque, of the Department of Philology and Translation at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide in Spain, note, the two main potential problems in collaborative class activities are a lack of participation by some members and the excessive control of group dynamics by participants with dominant personalities. To prevent such behaviors, positive interdependence and
shared responsibility should be created using the following techniques:

- Students should receive a group reward for their work, which creates reward interdependence. Students may receive a shared grade in at least one of the aspects of collaborative work.
- Create resource interdependence in which each student depends on the others to fill in their own knowledge gaps. For example, weekly readings can become shared readings. Each student in the group reads part of the material on the selected topics and shares what they’ve learned.
- Create roles for the work process. For example, one group might be required to depend on another to complete the assignment as a whole, with some students translating and others editing.
- Include anonymous peer evaluation in which each student evaluates the work of the other members, as well as the effectiveness of the group’s work in general, indicating both strengths and areas for improvement.

In the virtual classroom, good management of the socio-affective domain is essential for both the learning process and the translation process.

ESTABLISHING A SOCIO-AFFECTIVE DOMAIN IS KEY

In the virtual classroom, effective management of the socio-affective domain is essential for both the learning process and the translation process. The socio-affective strategies discussed here help optimize the instructor’s effectiveness and prepare students for the workplace by:

- Creating a sense of the instructor’s communicative proximity and social presence to encourage students’ ability to relax and become fully engaged.
- Creating a community of practice by using discussion forums and peer review, both for effective learning and to reduce stress and tension.
- Establishing situated learning to generate interest and connection with the future professional activity.

NOTES

3. González Davies, M. “Socioconstructivismo, humanismo y plataformas pedagógicas: De la teoría al proyecto auténtico de traducción,” In M. Cánovas, M. González Davies, and L. Keim (Editors), Acortar distancias. Las TIC en la clase de traducción y de lenguas extranjeras (October 2010), 144.

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Creating New Terminology: Do Translators Really Do This?

Here are the seven term formation principles from ISO 704 Terminology Work—Principles and Methods that allow us to assess existing synonyms or new term suggestions.

The rhetorical question in the title above originates in my work with translation students in the Master’s in Translation and Interpreting program at New York University. In their second semester, they may not have thought about translating in subject areas that are new to the target culture and where terminology has not yet been coined. I explain that, as translators, they might get to form new terms. Sometimes, I hear a tiny gasp from students in my online course.

Naturally, not every technical translator will coin new terminology in every assignment. There’s plenty of work in domains with little innovation and on documents with repetitive material. But there are also scenarios that most certainly include new concepts. For example, a patent is a text about a new invention that is by definition a concept that doesn’t exist elsewhere in that form and, therefore, has to be assigned a term. Translators may work in or for organizations where new departments or new roles need to be named on a regular basis. In manufacturing environments, for example, the number of existing products and new versions may be so high that new names are first suggested by computer programs before a human approves them. This is not the norm. It’s still humans who name most new concepts. So, the more systematically they go about it, the better for the audience.

Language professionals from around the world have come together in the framework of the International Organization for Standardization’s (ISO) Technical Committee 37, Language and Terminology, to create ISO 704 Terminology Work—Principles and Methods.¹ This international standard establishes the basic principles and methods for preparing and compiling terminologies both inside and outside the framework of standardization, and describes the links between objects, concepts, and their terminological representations. The standard also contains a section on term formation. The following will cover the seven term formation principles from ISO 704 that allow us to assess existing synonyms or new term suggestions.

While not all principles and methods are transferable to other languages, many are. Readers may recognize what works in another language, but also identify additional methods for their languages. My goal here is to share this topic with a wide audience and help make naming a more conscious and deliberate effort.

WHY DO WELL-FORMED TERMS AND NAMES MATTER?

One of the primary goals of technical material is to pass on information to a user. A large component of technical texts are terms and names (designations). Indeed, terms and names are the main carriers of information, as they’re the representations of concepts covered by the text.

If we invent terms and names randomly, chances are nobody will understand the concepts behind them. Communication will be inhibited or not occur. If we form terminology with a systematic approach, a larger percentage of readers will grasp the concept, and grasp it faster. In his Manuel pratique de terminology, Canadian translator-terminologist Robert Dubuc states: “[a] term is well-formed if the concept comes through either via the etymology or via the components of the term. Terms that follow the morphology of a language are often well-formed.”² [Note: Translation mine.]

ISO TERM FORMATION PRINCIPLES

The 2009 edition of ISO 704 lists seven principles of term formation for the English language. They allow us to examine existing or new terms. In fact, a better term for these principles might be “term assessment principles.” The sections on the following pages cover the seven principles, complete with examples from my work as a terminologist. For more details, please see the standard itself. (Link provided at the end of this article.)
CREATING NEW TERMINOLOGY: DO TRANSLATORS REALLY DO THIS? continued

1. TRANSPARENCY
If terms and names are transparent, the informed reader will not need a dictionary or definition to understand them. The meaning of the concept they represent will be clear from looking at the designation. Terms that are transparent reflect important characteristics of the concept (e.g., form or function).

Medical terminology, for example, is generally transparent to the subject matter experts of the field. Medical professionals will immediately recognize the concept underlying the term microprolactinoma as a small (micro-) tumor (-oma) that has an effect on the level of the hormone, prolactin, in the body of the patient.

That’s not to say that all medical terminology is created with transparency in mind. Some are ill-formed. For example, a particular gene of the fruit fly was named Cheap Date, as a geneticist-friend pointed out years ago. Even to him the name was murky, but then he learned that the name was motivated by the fact that flies with a mutation in this gene are susceptible to alcohol.

2. LINGUISTIC ECONOMY
While the term/name must be clear and unique, it should also not be a long description. After all, we could use definitions to be precise, but that wouldn’t be convenient in most communication scenarios. Therefore, a term should be as short as possible. This matters even more in environments where limited space is available (e.g., cell phone screens).

Even where space plays no roll, communicators often prefer short terms for convenience. For example, NATO is used far more often than the full form North Atlantic Treaty Organization. But users and creators of terminology must be aware that shorter terms are less transparent. When asked whether DNA is a transparent term, invariably at least one says yes. Tongue in cheek I affirm that everyone knows that it refers to the Democratic National Alliance, a former political party in Trinidad and Tobago. Without knowing at least the subject area, we cannot be sure of the underlying concept.

3. CONSISTENCY
Within the subject field, designations should be consistent and reflect the underlying concept system. Readers new to a subject field learn more quickly when the terminology is consistent, as retention is enhanced. Some good examples of this include:

- Chemical formulas and their corresponding terms that reflect the underlying concept system (e.g., N₂O, or dinitrogen monoxide; Cl₂O₇, or dichlorine heptoxide).
- Rotary-wing aircrafts are named based on the number of rotor systems each aircraft has (e.g., a multicopter is one with more than two rotor systems).

4. APPROPRIATENESS
The designation must be appropriate for the audience of the text and the subject field and shouldn’t have any unwanted connotations. This principle suggests that we pick the right register for the audience. But it also helps us avoid creating terms that are hard to pronounce or that have distracting undertones.

Even companies that aren’t concerned with many of the other principles discussed here obey the latter aspect of this one when coming new product names. For example, when Windows® Vista was named, language experts for over 100 languages were asked what Vista meant to them. When only the Lithuanian linguists mentioned that višta means hen in their language, the Windows team deemed Vista acceptable for use worldwide.

5. DERIVABILITY AND COMPOUNDABILITY
A new concept and its term may lead to new ways of communicating about them. If possible, we should keep in mind while coining the term that we may have to form other parts of speech (derivability) or compounds (compoundability) that are based on the term in the future. Here are two examples:

- Starting with the Microsoft® Office 2007 suite, the user interface navigation changed from menu-driven navigation to the “ribbon,” a graphical control element in the form of a set of toolbars placed on several tabs. Pretty soon other software developers “ribbonized” their interfaces and introduced ribbons as navigational aids. And eventually the ribbon was
Readers new to a subject field learn more quickly when the terminology is consistent, as retention is enhanced.

broken down into “ribbon tabs” and “ribbon groups.”

■ When German terminologists decided that the noun for the English “upload” would be “Upload” in German, they didn’t think about the term as a verb yet. For a while, even the IT community struggled with the past tense of the term, which could be upgeloaded or upgeloaded. Both sounded cumbersome and looked incorrect.

6. LINGUISTIC CORRECTNESS

A new term must follow standard rules of the language with regard to spelling or grammar. Particularly areas of business that are sales-oriented are prone to violating this principle in their naming. Being hip trumps being correct. And yet, following established rules allows us to create terms or names that will be acceptable to a larger audience, less exposed to ridicule, and less likely to necessitate a change.

Inspired by English, many business owners of small businesses in Germany use the apostrophe “s” for possessives in their business name: e.g., Mirko’s Donerbude or Erika’s Nagelstudio (correct: Mirhos Donerbude and Eribas Nagelstudio). As linguists, we’re aware of hyphenation, capitalization, and other rules that apply to our languages and follow them.

7. PREFERENCE FOR NATIVE LANGUAGE

Often, we have a choice between a loanword, which we could introduce from the source language into the target language, and a term in the native language of the target market. The preferred term in most cases is a term in the native language (not a loan), because it’s generally easier for target-language readers to understand. This principle applies specifically to our scenario of creating terms during the translation process.

Particularly the IT professionals in other countries are willing to use English terminology, but that doesn’t always work out. Even IT experts in Germany voted to replace the above-mentioned example of the verb upgeladen with the existing and perfectly fine German term hochladen when asked in a survey during an industry event in 2004. Replacing such a prevalent term many years after it was introduced is extremely costly for a company.

That’s why it was a surprise when Microsoft insisted on using the English term “firstline worker” (for a new category of workers) in many target-language markets. It’s one thing to retain the name of a product or a company name, but it’s not advisable to impose terms for general concepts on another language. Even if we don’t speak Japanese, we can see from the excerpt shown in Figure 3 above, which comes from a Japanese website, that it might be a problem. Just think of the sales representative who is trying to introduce clients to a product for firstline workers. It’s easy to imagine that by the second time they have to pronounce it, they’ll have invented something that works more naturally for them.

THERE’S NOTHING EASY ABOUT NAMING

In my classroom, we look at terms in the context of their underlying concept and assess whether or not they meet the principles discussed above. Students notice that most terms don’t meet all the principles. As mentioned earlier, a term can often only be transparent (where the meaning of the underlying concept is readily understood) or short (where the meaning is less transparent). When this is the case, a concept might be represented by both a long and a short form. For instance, the long, more transparent, form should be used initially, but then the shorter form can be used in the rest of the document, especially if space is an issue. Sometimes long forms aren’t very easy to pronounce, and therefore might lack appropriateness. Again, this is where a short form might come in handy.

There’s nothing easy about naming, especially if we don’t do it regularly. Companies that are serious about their linguistic presentation and professional image put work into naming their products, features, departments, job titles, and most of all the company itself. As their extended representatives, translators must put equal care into the coining of new terms and names. ISO 704 provides us with seven term formation principles to guide us in this endeavor.

NOTES


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Why You Should Care about Terminology Management—Even if You Never Translate a Single Term

Managing terminology can improve your translation speed, your earnings, and, ultimately, make you a happier translator!

When my favorite topic comes up in conversation with translation professionals, I consistently hear people say three things:
1. I know I should be managing terminology.
2. But I don’t really understand why.
3. And even if I understood why, I wouldn’t know how.

Almost any translation professional constantly deals with words that they either have to look up or should be translating in a uniform way for consistency.

In the following, I’ll address the two latter comments, because that’s actually easier to do than some experts have you believe. (Of course, the first comment needs no addressing, since if you think you should be managing terminology, I couldn’t agree more!)

Because this is a discussion of terminology management fundamentals, let’s begin with the most basic concept.

WHAT IS A TERM?
In my experience, if you ask two terminologists to define a term, any term, you’re guaranteed to get three different answers, at a minimum. So it shouldn’t come as a surprise that there are many definitions for “term,” ranging from the esoteric (e.g., “a designation that represents a general concept by linguistic means”) to the mundane (e.g., “a word that matters to the client of a translation professional,” which is the definition I give to those in my introduction to terminology management course). But ultimately, in this terminologist’s view, the question of what is and isn’t a term is ultimately an academic concern.

WHAT KIND OF WORDS SHOULD TRANSLATION PROFESSIONALS MANAGE?
Now this is a question that’s actually relevant to the practice of translation.
My personal view is that not only the special words that belong to a specific discipline should be managed as part of every translation project, but every “difficult” word. And by “difficult,” I mean any word, or string of words that:

- You don’t know the translation of and would have to look up in a dictionary or other resource. Example: technical terms, idioms, jargon, archaic words, and any other words with which you may be unfamiliar.
- You know and that might be translated more than one way. For example, if you’re translating a computer catalogue, it would probably be a good idea to use the term “USB stick” consistently throughout the catalogue instead of using “USB stick” on one page, “flash drive” on another, and “thumb drive” on yet another, even though they all mean the same thing.

While it’s mostly the translation professionals working in domains such as technical, scientific, and legal translation who deal with “terminology,” it’s probably safe to assume that almost any translation professional constantly deals with words that they either have to look up or should be translating in a uniform way for consistency.

In my experience, if you ask two terminologists to define a term, any term, you’re guaranteed to get three different answers, at a minimum.

**WHAT ARE TRANSITION TIMES?**

Transition times are the periods when translation professionals switch from translation mode to terminology research mode (i.e., when they’re neither translating nor researching terminology). For example, when working with online dictionaries, transition time is the time required for moving the cursor from the translation environment (e.g., a word processor or translation memory system) to the dictionary resource (e.g., a website or standalone dictionary application). Transition times can vary from a few seconds to minutes (e.g., when working with multiple paper dictionaries).

**WHAT IS AD HOC TERMINOLOGY MANAGEMENT?**

When someone solves a problem in an ad hoc fashion, they’re doing so in an unsystematic, on-the-fly manner. Translation professionals who use ad hoc terminology management resolve terminology issues one by one as they encounter them during translation.

What does translating with ad hoc terminology management look like? When you translate without a comprehensive, project-specific, multilingual term base, you must manage terminology ad hoc, meaning during translation. Doing terminology management during translation always means you have to interrupt the translation process to manage terminology! The result is an increase in transition times, leading to decreased productivity. This rule is particularly true if the following conditions apply:

- The source document contains many difficult words.
- Many of the difficult words are unknown words.
- You want to translate all the difficult words correctly.
- You want to translate all the difficult words consistently.

A typical translation process using ad hoc terminology management looks like this:

- Translate until you come across a difficult word in the source document.
- Stop translating.
- Transition from the translation environment to the terminology management environment (e.g., consulting one or a combination of print and online dictionaries, online term bases, parallel texts, etc.).
- Search for the target-language word in the terminology management environment.
- Transition from the terminology management environment back to the translation environment.
- Manually insert the target-language word into the target-language content.
- Stop translating, and so on and so forth. (See Figure 1 above.)

**WHAT IS PROACTIVE TERMINOLOGY MANAGEMENT?**

Being proactive means taking control and preparing a solution for a problem in advance. Likewise, in proactive terminology management, translation professionals systematically extract and research the difficult words involved in a translation project. Most importantly, terminology extraction and research happen before translation begins.

What does translating with proactive terminology management look like?
WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY MANAGEMENT—
EVEN IF YOU NEVER TRANSLATE A SINGLE TERM continued

Having a comprehensive, project-specific, multilingual term base available at the beginning of a translation project made a dramatic difference in my personal practice when I was still working as a translation professional. In all likelihood, being proactive when it comes to terminology management would also work for you. Why?

- You don’t have to research difficult words during translation, which means;
- You can translate without interruptions, which means;
- You can translate faster because there are no transition times involving going back and forth between your translation environment and the terminology management environment.

It’s also worth noting that, at least in my personal experience, transitioning from terminology management to translation only once not only improves translation speed but also quality. Eliminating interruptions for terminology management also eliminates the risk of losing your train of thought when managing terminology during translation. (See Figure 2 above for an illustration.)

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO IMPLEMENT PROACTIVE TERMINOLOGY MANAGEMENT?

For many quality-conscious translation professionals, the answer to this question is: surprisingly little! To implement a simple proactive terminology management practice, you only have to do two things. First, you need to read the source text in its entirety before translation (which many of you already do). Second, while reading the source text, extract, research, and record the difficult words, phrases, and their translations before you begin the actual document translation process.

Even translation professionals who are most comfortable working with a word processor can start managing terminology proactively—tomorrow, if they so choose. As you can see in Figure 3 to the left, a standard word processor can easily display a term base window in addition to windows for the source and target text, respectively.

HOW IS A TRANSLATION MEMORY SYSTEM A SUPERIOR TRANSLATION ENVIRONMENT, EVEN FOR NON-REpetitive TEXT?

Many translation professionals I know who work on non-technical/scientific/...
legal/financial translations would never consider exchanging their word processor for a translation memory system as their primary translation environment. The main reason for this attitude seems to be the persisting myth that using a translation memory system makes sense only when translating repetitive text. And many translation professionals who currently use a word processor for translation deal with non-repetitive text.

I've been telling anyone who is willing to listen that while translation memory systems are most useful for the translation of repetitive text, they also make a world of a difference for the translation of non-repetitive text. One of the main reasons that translation memory systems are so useful is that once words and phrases are stored in the terminology management component of a translation memory system, these words and phrases are automatically recognized in the source text. Automatic terminology recognition means that all difficult words are highlighted in the source sentence, and the translated (difficult) words stored in the term base can be inserted into the target sentence at the push of a button. It deserves emphasizing that automatic terminology recognition works with a completely empty translation memory database, as Figure 4 above illustrates. Plus this feature is available in every translation memory system with which I'm familiar, including the many free translation memory products and web-based services available today.

**While translation memory systems are most useful for the translation of repetitive text, they also make a world of a difference for the translation of non-repetitive text.**

**WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN FOR YOU?**

If terminology management before translation is currently not part of your translation routine, you now have one more compelling reason to change your ways. In addition to being able to produce more consistent (meaning better) translations, proactive terminology management could also make you a faster translator (no more pesky interruptions to look up words during translation). And it cannot be emphasized enough that managing terminology proactively doesn't really add time/effort to a project, since you have to look up the difficult words in a project anyway.

If you still use a word processor for translation, with proactive terminology management, switching to a translation memory system will take your translation practice to a whole new level of speed and efficiency, even if your source texts are not repetitive (yes, I’m talking to you, literary translators). Proactive terminology management in a translation memory system is a good idea for all translation professionals who look up words, be they proper terms or just difficult words, as part of their translation projects.

And finally, remember that proactive terminology management not only means higher translation speed, improved earnings, and, ultimately, a happier you, but the results also make for happier clients.

**NOTE**


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Bring Your “A” Game to Video Game Localization

If you’re a translator who is passionate about games and audiovisual content, if you like to get creative and enjoy jobs of the “transcreation” type, and if you’re not afraid of a good challenge, this could be a good niche for you. From in-game scripts to packaging and marketing, video games offer a broad spectrum of content bound to keep translators engaged and entertained—and challenged!

As gaming quickly becomes the world’s favorite pastime and as video game developers and publishers continue to invest to internationalize their games, there are more opportunities for professional translators who have a passion for localizing this type of content. However, the gaming industry calls it “video game localization” instead of “video game translation” for a reason. Video games require translators to take so much more than the translatable text into account. Its localization is a target-oriented translation and its goal is to entertain.

If you’re a translator who is passionate about games and audiovisual content, if you like to get creative and enjoy jobs of the “transcreation” type, and if you’re not afraid of a good challenge, this could be a good niche for you.

The following describes the different aspects to consider when working on video game localization so that you can bring your “A” game each time.

THE GAMER IS EVERYTHING

When localizing a game, we need to constantly think about who will be playing that game; we need to think about “the gamer.” We want the gamer to be entertained and feel compelled to continue playing the game, and to buy products from that developer or publisher. If a segment doesn’t translate effectively into the target language, or the translation could confuse the gamer or disrupt their experience, we might need to consider sacrificing the accuracy of the localization that we render. This means that some character names, terminology, and complete phrases might need to be entirely transcreated. Think of it as switching the focus from words to intention and emotion. The gamer comes first. We want those playing the localized version to be immersed in the universe of the game and to have the same experience as those playing the non-localized version of the game. Your job is to make them feel that the game was designed for them.

When localizing a game, we need to constantly think about who will be playing that game; we need to think about “the gamer.”

So, do you need to be a gamer yourself? There are conflicting opinions on this. I’ve seen successful game localizers who are not gamers themselves, but who love creative translations and are detail-oriented. I’ve also seen full-time gamers fail at localization because they lack other important traits that a good video game localizer should have. Therefore, you don’t necessarily have to be an active...
gamer yourself, but you need to *like* and *understand* games. Why? Because you’ll likely be required to play and familiarize yourself with the games you localize.

**THE CONTENT TO LOCALIZE VARIES—a LOT!**

One of the most fascinating aspects of video game localization is the large variety of content that needs localization. From in-game scripts to packaging and marketing, video games offer a broad spectrum of content bound to keep translators engaged and entertained. And when I say “entertained,” I mean challenged.

Most video games will have in-game and marketing assets to localize. Some of this content can include:

- User interfaces (menus, help screens, on-screen tutorials, etc.)
- Narratives, dialogues (scripts for dubbing or subtitling)
- Songs
- Manuals
- Official game guides
- Packaging
- Marketing and promotional material (digital and print)
- Websites (game website, newsletters, blogs, etc.)
- In-game graphics
- User agreements

You might be thinking, “does this mean that I’ll be translating a legal document one day and a piece of artwork the next for the same game?” The answer is, yes. The versatility of a good video game localizer should not be taken for granted.

**BE CREATIVE, BUT THIS IS YOUR INCREDIBLY REDUCED SPACE TO DO IT!**

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in video game localization is this dichotomy between needing to be bold and creative and balancing this with the character limitations that might be imposed. For translators of languages that tend to be considerably longer than English, reducing the length of your translation to fit the character limit can be a real nightmare. However, it’s important to understand that those limits are there for a reason. In video games, as with other domains such as software localization, the user interface might be designed in a way that only allows a certain amount of space for text. If we don’t follow the character limit, the text will be truncated—something we need to absolutely avoid unless we want to have alterations with the video game testers.

The gamer comes first. We want those playing the localized version to be immersed in the universe of the game and to have the same experience as those playing the non-localized version.

Fortunately, we have technology as an ally when dealing with character restrictions. If you’re working with a computer-assisted translation tool, you can set it up to automatically count and show you the characters used in each segment, and even notify you if you’re exceeding the limit. If you’re working directly in Excel, you can also configure it so that the segment next to where you’re typing the translation shows you the number of characters used. Let technology help you with the tedious character counting to enable your imagination to flow and render an amazingly creative translation. You’ll surely need to tap into your imagination, get cleverly inventive, and be resourceful to express the same meaning and feel of the original in a limited space.

**TAGS AND VARIABLES AND GENDER, OH MY!**

Two important elements that you’ll have to deal with in video game localization are tags and variables. Translators are likely all too familiar with these, especially if they translate software. Tags are formatting indicators in the text that must stay exactly the same in the translation. We have to identify what the tags are modifying to place them correctly in our translation. Sometimes the purpose of the tag is very obvious. For example, a tag that reads `<COMMA>` is referring to the punctuation mark. Variables, on the other hand, are values that can change, depending on the conditions or on information that’s passed to the program. For example, a segment that reads “%n requests” indicates that the variable is going to represent a number, as in “2 requests.”

Beware! If the target language you translate into has masculine and feminine form, variables can be especially tricky. A classic example in Spanish is the phrase “USERNAME, welcome!” Translating this literally might not work well, depending on the gender of the user. For example, it’s okay to say “Juan, bienvenido,” but what if the user is a woman? I cannot say “Maria, bienvenida.” because I would be addressing the female reader with the masculine form. Therefore, you must use an alternate translation that avoids using the feminine or masculine form in Spanish, such as “USERNAME, te damos la bienvenida.”

**LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC JOKES AND REFERENCES**

A large number of video games will have language-specific jokes, puns, sarcasm, irony, and pop-culture references. Significant colloquial language might be used. Such fixed phrases or expressions cannot be translated literally, so we need to find the right equivalent in our target language.

For example, the phrase “a piece of cake” might not translate literally into the target language, so we need to find an equivalent to convey that something is very easy. In Spanish, we have the saying “es pan comido” (“it’s eaten bread”), which is an idiom that means that something can be done easily. There are other fixed phrases that
If a segment doesn’t translate effectively into the target language, or the translation could confuse the gamer or disrupt the player’s experience, we might need to consider sacrificing the accuracy of the localization that we render.

This same criterion should be applied to all proper names within the game, including the in-game art, geographical places, entities, battles, etc. Otherwise, you risk the gamer missing out on the immersive experience of the game. Remember that localization is your ally for creating an immersive experience for gamers in any language.

Unleashing your creative self will serve you well in this field, but remember you should never forget that video game localization is an audiovisual entertainment form. This means that you cannot separate the text from what players are seeing and hearing on-screen. So, have fun being creative with your translations, but don’t forget the visual and audio aspects. Don’t exceed the character limitation, don’t place the tags and variables incorrectly, and basically, don’t have fun (just joking!). Video game localization can be lots of fun, but at the same time very technical.

This article does not intend to be comprehensive, since there are numerous other aspects that are important to video game localization. Rather, I hope I’ve provided a small window into what it could be like to localize video games.

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A Look at Subtitling and Closed-Captioning Software

After a brief overview of the technological developments in this field, we'll review the pros and cons of some of the top programs on the market, including a peek into the future of subtitling and closed-captioning software.

When I started translating audiovisual content, linguists in the industry weren’t called “audiovisual translators,” but “movie translators.” I worked on paper that was formatted with spaces for the title, page number, in time (the time at which the subtitle appears on-screen), out time (the time at which the subtitle disappears), and the translation, which was divided by letter. (See Figure 1 on page 30 for an example.) My colleagues and I would listen to the dialogue on the video played in a three-quarters VCR (the width of the film was three-quarters of an inch), pause it, write the in time and out time, and subtract the in time from the out time to get the duration of the subtitle. We would then have to convert that number of frames into spaces, translate the dialogue mentally, count the characters to see if they fit in the space allowed, and finally write it down with a pencil. There were no spellcheckers available, so the writing had to be perfect at that point. We would then take a large stack of pages to the editing room to be typed by the Chyron operator so the subtitles could later be burned into the film reels.

Moviola and Computers: Then I started working the night shift for a bigger company, arriving just in time to see them transitioning from a Moviola to computers and a three-quarters VCR. The Moviola was an editing machine that allowed a film editor to view the film while editing. We would load film reels while performing some sleight of hand to get the celluloid to go into the Moviola’s many nooks and crannies so that it could be run. Sometimes the light source would burn the film, and if that happened, we would have to cut the piece that burned and splice it back together. I did only a few movies this way before the company provided me with access to a computer.

However, the computer didn’t have a hard drive. The software was run through a floppy disk drive in DOS. We used SoftNi, the first PC-based subtitling system. It had all you needed, except the background color for the subtitle was black, which bothered everyone. I remember how happy we were to get away from a black screen and into the whiteness of Word documents.

Subtitling software isn’t cheap, and you should be utilizing every feature available to you, not only a handful, like most audiovisual translators.

Betamax and VHS: The introduction of the home VCR opened a different world, allowing translators to work from home. We first worked with Betamax and then with VHS, along with our personal computers, still using SoftNi software. We would have to go to the office to get the videotapes, but this gave me and my colleagues a chance to connect with each other.

International Couriers: The profession stopped being local once tapes could be delivered to linguists around the world via DHL and FedEx. Translators would work with licensed software paid for by their client and, in rare occasions, with their own software (I state “rare” because prices were unaffordable for freelancers). This is when the number of audiovisual translators increased from a handful to dozens.

Internet and FTP: Audiovisual translation exploded when the file transfer protocol became available and both video and templates could be sent via the internet. This is when the number of audiovisual
translators increased from dozens of specialized linguists to hundreds.

Cloud-Based: Cloud-based subtitling software finished opening the doors for audiovisual translators. Larger clients now have their own subtitling software. Medium clients still pay for licenses for their linguists, but more and more translators are buying subtitling software, which allows them to work for several clients. With the cloud, the number of subtitling experts increased from the hundreds to the thousands.

SUBTITLING SOFTWARE WISH LIST

Now that you have an idea of how much technology has progressed in this field, let’s explore what features are indispensable in today’s software. During my research for this article, I selected eight basic features I considered a must in subtitling software. This might not seem so important to those who’ve been using subtitling programs for a while, but it’s very important for companies who are just starting to develop their own. The architecture of a new program must consider a solution for all these features at the front end of the project or risk very expensive patches at the back end.

Free or Affordable: This goes without saying. Some programs on the market still make it unaffordable for the average translator.

Spellchecker: Some programs have their own spellchecker and others integrate dictionaries from Word, Open Office, or other open dictionaries.

Find and Replace, Undo and Redo, Merge and Split: We tend to take these features for granted, but when you’re developing new software, these are very hard to integrate into your program.

Audio Waveform: Certain software programs offer a waveform feature. A waveform is a visual representation of the film’s audio track that can be used to help time the subtitle. Some consider this feature a huge convenience, since you can drag and position subtitles on the waveform, along with their in and out times. I personally don’t like this method and don’t use it. It’s probably due to my background, learning how to time subtitles with a pause button and a piece of paper. I can time by eye pretty accurately within three frames of audio just by looking at the timecode on screen. But young audiovisual translators are used to the waveform feature, and new developers should include it in their programs.

Full-Screen Mode: Since context is king in subtitling, the size of the screen matters. This is more important nowadays where, due to security concerns, linguists receive heavily watermarked videos with which to work. Some programs borrow video players (e.g., VLC media player) and some have them fully integrated.

Zero Mouse Interaction: I’m not talking about an absolute zero, but as far away from the mouse as we can get. The less interaction our hand has with the mouse, the faster we can type. The faster we can type, the more money we can make.

COMPARING SUBTITLING SOFTWARE

After doing an extensive search of over 50 software programs, I decided to focus on a comparison of the features of three free and three commercial brands. These include:

- **Freeware:** Subtitle Edit, Subtitle Workshop, and Aegisub
- **Commercial:** SubtitleNEXT, EZTitles, and Ooona Tools

The results can be found in the table on page 31.

If you decide to use cloud-based software (e.g., Ooona Tools or the online version of Subtitle Edit), I would recommend reviewing the nondisclosure agreements you’ve signed with your clients, since these programs store information on servers and not just on your desktop. You could be breaking your agreements without knowing it.

PRICING

Ooona Tools


Only the professional versions of Ooona Tools have the waveform feature and allow you to click and drag on it. Per their website, the price range goes from the Translate package ($12.00 per month) to the Review Pro package ($450 per month).

SubtitleNEXT


Per their website, SubtitleNEXT has a package called Air Live, which allows for subtitle insertion during on-air playback. You can buy SubtitleNEXT Novice for $485. You can rent SubtitleNEXT Explorer for $142 per month or buy it for $1,881. Or you could buy the SubtitleNEXT Expert bundle, which includes all the plug-ins, for $3,807.

EZTitles


You can rent or own EZTitles. They have six types of licenses from which to choose. You can rent the TV, DVD, and Enterprise packages for 80 to 100 euros per month. The purchase price ranges from 1,620 euros for their Basic package to 2,380 euros for their Enterprise package. Only TV and Enterprise licenses have closed-caption capabilities.
which means typing about 120 words per minute). The “Intel processor” in your brain can certainly translate more than 120 words per minute. If you’re open and willing to accept advice from me, let it be this: take the test and do some exercises to increase your typing speed.

FUTURE OF SUBTITLING SOFTWARE

Machine Translation and Post-Editing:
They are upon us. Localization companies and departments will start integrating them into their subtitling software. Of course, how fast this will happen will depend on how many translators accept post-editing work. Imagine if no translators accept post-edits? Or, a more moderate idea: what if translators charge the same for post-editing as for translating? I think this would slow down the snowball coming our way.

Translation Memories:
SDL Trados Studio broke ground last year with their subtitling plug-in. I think, more than anything else, that this is the future of subtitling. Companies will start integrating translation memory into their proprietary software (I’ll leave the legal and ethical considerations of this one for another time), and audiovisual translators will finally be able to reap the rewards of all their body of work by bringing it together in a memory.

There are many subtitling programs (and at least one plug-in I know about) on the market today. My recommendation is to watch YouTube tutorials or use the free trials most companies offer to see what user interface you prefer. And don’t just look at one, invest your time and look at three at the very least to compare and make an informed decision.

NOTES

1. A Chyron is a machine that creates text-based graphics to be superimposed on a television screen or film frame, such as subtitles or the banners you see on a newscast (e.g., “Breaking news: The Storm is Coming.”).


Deborah Wexler is an ATA-certified English>Spanish translator and editor with over 20 years of experience specializing in audiovisual translation and Spanish orthography. She is the cofounder and administrator of ATA’s Audiovisual Division. She has translated over 6,000 program hours for television, VHS, DVD, Blu-ray, streaming media, and the big screen. She is the operations manager of the Americas at Pixelogic Media. She is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences, and has mentored and trained many translators who want to get into the subtitling field.
Vicarious Trauma and Interpreters

The first time I heard of interpreters experiencing vicarious trauma was in 2000. First it was mentioned in relation to the interpreters working during a trial related to the Balkan Wars at the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. But the idea was quickly expanded to include all interpreters working directly with victims of crime and/or medical patients. Simultaneously, the sign language community was becoming acutely aware of the impact of vicarious trauma on our sign language colleagues.

Generally, vicarious trauma is understood to be the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they hear trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured. According to the American Counseling Association, it’s important not to confuse vicarious trauma with “burnout.” Interpreters may be more at risk because they restate the facts related in first person, especially when this is combined with a phenomenon called “receptor fatigue,” which is a biological response to overstimulation of one of the senses.

Below, you’ll find a listing of some of the articles, books, trainings, and other reference material available on the subject. This is not a complete or exhaustive review of what’s available, but it seeks to provide a clear sampling of what is being written and studied.

**SIGN LANGUAGE**

Here’s a sample of the material produced by the sign language and American Sign Language community


**MEDICAL**

In the medical interpreting world, vicarious trauma has also become a subject of concern. Some of the trainings and articles available in this field include:


**LEGAL**

Marjory Bancroft, a specialist in this field, authored a 40-hour curriculum called Voices of Love and began publishing a blog in 2015 under the same name. Unfortunately, that project is not funded and not currently active, but you can read the blog archives here: http://bit.ly/voices-love.

There is, however, a 30-hour curriculum called Breaking Silence, a training for interpreters working in victim services, that has a lot of content for addressing both interpreting for trauma and managing its effects. A set of materials by Marjory Bancroft, Katharine Allen, Carola Green, and Lois Feuerle is available free for download from Ayuda:

In 2017, the National Center for State Courts published a listing of resources regarding vicarious trauma: http://bit.ly/NCSC-vicarious.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE FROM WITHIN THE INTERPRETING WORLD


SCIENTIFIC AND GENERAL INTEREST JOURNALS

Articles of interest published in other scientific and general interest journals include:


Vicarious trauma constitutes an area where there is still much opportunity for research and study. Such further research, as well as raising awareness of the issues, can help foster greater public understanding and appreciation of the profession and may help enable interpreters to advocate with regard to their working conditions and even fair compensation.

Cristina Helmerichs is an ATA director and chair of ATA’s Interpretation Policy Advisory Committee. She has more than 30 years of interpreting and translation experience as an English<>Spanish conference and judicial interpreter. She is certified as an interpreter by both the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT). She has been a consultant to the Federal Court Interpreters Certification Program and the National Center for State Courts Interpreting Training Program. She is also an interpreter trainer. She serves on the Texas Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators’ Education Committee. She was ATA’s and NAJIT’s technical adviser to the European Union’s Grotius II Project. Contact: cristina@cristinahelmerichsd.com.
Talking with the Developer of GT4T

Dallas Cao is the developer of GT4T, a little, unobtrusive application that allows you to connect from any Windows or Mac application to a large range of machine translation (MT) engines. As such, it represents a different way of accessing MT suggestions from many of the translation environment tools within their interfaces, and it also allows you to access MT suggestions from within any non-translation-specific environment. Also, you can use GT4T to automatically override terminology used by the MT engines. I talked to Dallas about the history of the tool, its features, and his future plans.

Jost: More and more translators use MT as one of their resources for translation. Professional translators who are using a translation environment or computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool usually use an API-based connector to a MT engine that brings the MT suggestions right into their environment alongside translation memory matches, term base suggestions, and other resources. Your tool, GT4T, deals with MT differently. But before we get into what it actually does and how it can be used, tell us a little bit about GT4T's history and why you chose to create it in the first place.

Dallas: The original idea of GT4T is simple. You select a portion of source text and press a keyboard shortcut, and the selection is then replaced by Google's MT translation.

I started working on GT4T for my personal use as early as 2009, when the neural MT engine was nonexistent and MT was little more than a laughingstock. But I found while MT was almost always bad at understanding the structure of a sentence, it could be used to translate phrases. I wanted to have a tool that would allow humans to decide and choose which part of a sentence to be “translated” by MT on the fly without disrupting their workflow.

I was a translator who had never thought of becoming a programmer. If there had been such a tool then, I would have been a happy user of it and there would never have been a GT4T.

The first version of GT4T was written as a Microsoft Word macro and only worked in Microsoft Word. I was excited to find that it was even more useful than I had initially thought, and very soon the idea of selling it came to my mind. There are always phrases that human translators know MT will certainly do well with, like a list of country names. Using GT4T would simply save some keystrokes. With time, that alone would be a huge productivity gain.

To make a long story short, the spirit of entrepreneurship is to continually push a simple idea forward and see how far it can go. With some twists and turns, GT4T has grown in features and translation quality. As MT gets better, GT4T automatically gets better too! I have also grown into a confident programmer.

Let’s talk about the tool itself. It runs on Windows and Mac and gives access to Google Translate (either the neural or the statistical MT engine), Microsoft Translator, DeepL Pro, Yandex, and a variety of Chinese-based providers, including Baidu, Youdao, Tencent, Sogou, CloudTranslation, and NiuTrans. The user can select which engines—and which language combination—they want to use, and upon highlighting text in any application and pressing a keyboard combination, the result(s) is displayed in a pop-up window. If any of the suggestions are helpful, they can replace the original text in the originating application. Am I correct so far? Do you want to talk about some other features that differentiate GT4T?

GT4T also offers special shortcuts that allow you to automatically translate segments in a CAT tool like SDL Trados Studio or memoQ. You can hit a shortcut to translate the current segment or several segments. The shortcuts work in a long list of CAT tools, including web-based ones like Smartling and Crowdin.

Other than MT engines, GT4T also helps access various online dictionaries in the same fashion—without having to leave your working environment or open a browser window. You can use a shortcut to submit your selection simultaneously to several online dictionaries, glossaries, or terminology sites like the Interactive Terminology for Europe (the EU's terminology database), Microsoft Glossary, or the terminology collection at Proz.com.

GT4T goes one step further than similar tools like IntelliWebSearch. Instead of automatically opening the webpages, GT4T collects the dictionary results and displays them in a pop-up window. The user can pick a translation and hit Enter to insert it into the document in which they are working.

One interesting feature of GT4T you didn’t mention is the custom-made glossary that automatically replaces terms in the MT suggestions. I assume that it’s particularly valuable for languages with no morphology, like Chinese. What about languages with rich morphology (which I assume will result in a lot of missed replacements)? Can the user apply some kind of wildcard to find morphological variants? And is there a way to accommodate things like gender and possible automatic replacement of articles or pronouns?
The replacement feature doesn’t support wildcards, just exact matches, and there’s no way to accommodate things like gender, nor are there any future plans for this. A feature like that would require a team of linguists who know many languages. So far, GT4T is still a one-man endeavor, and I have no plan to have a team or incorporate it.

I have limited knowledge of linguistics and don’t know how well the replacement feature would work with language pairs other than English-Chinese. However, I know of at least one Dutch-English translator who is very excited about this feature, so I assume it’s also useful for languages with rich morphology when properly used.

Other than replacing MT translation results, users can also use glossaries to keep their translations consistent. The glossary file is an Excel spreadsheet and users can easily import old translations or add items. To find out how a term is translated in previous translations, you’ll just have to select it and press a shortcut. And you’re not limited to one CAT tool or app. You can search the glossary anywhere in any app.

I personally think that MT as a translation resource is often more useful on a subsegment level. The way that’s often done in translation environments is to have the tool automatically select subsegments from a longer MT suggestion on the basis of keystrokes. Is that something that’s possible with your tool? And if not, are you thinking of introducing something like that?

Yes, that’s actually the original idea of GT4T! You select a chunk of text, whether it be a phrase or even a word, where you think MT will do a good job. I always want GT4T to be used only as a productivity tool, a reference. Translators use it to save a few keystrokes, or get translation suggestions on a subsegment, or simply when their brain stops at a word and needs to be nudged.

But that’s not really what I mean. What I mean is rather than manually highlighting a fragment and looking for a translation, it’s much more efficient to have various MT suggestions in the background that display fragments only when there are matches between the first few keystrokes of the translator within their translation environment and something within the MT suggestions. I understand that this is possibly not as relevant in a target language like Chinese, but it is for many other languages. Is that something that could be implemented?

That’s an interesting idea, and would be revolutionary if this could be done. GT4T is a standalone app that offers system-wide keyboard shortcuts. It cannot “see” the text of a document until a user makes a selection and hits a shortcut. Perhaps it’s easier for CAT tool developers to implement this feature within their tools. It could also be an add-on. As a standalone app, GT4T would probably need to pre-translate documents first in the background. I’ll think about it.

In your tool, it’s possible to enter personal API keys for the various MT engines. I assume this means that I would then receive suggestions from that respective engine via my own API and pay for it. How is that different from receiving suggestions without me entering an API? Can users access their own customized engines at Google or Microsoft like this? I assume that you’re also accessing the engines via your API key and that you need to pay for that. How does that work for you financially? Also, some users who use your tool to access DeepL Pro cannot access it otherwise because they’re living outside the European Union. Suggestions from DeepL Pro are more expensive than those from other tools. How do you account for that?

Yes, users can choose either to use their own API and pay a small subscription fee for GT4T, or buy a plan that already includes MT data. There’s no difference between using your own API or the built-in API. You get the same results from the MT engine. I haven’t started on the customized engines yet, but I’ll certainly study them when I have time.

As the sole developer of this app, my strength is flexibility, but I also know my limits, which is why I’ve been hugely dependent on users’ suggestions and reports for new features.
GT4T offers very flexible plans. Users can buy either time-based packages that have no usage-limit, or character-based packages with no time-limit. I pay MT engines on the basis of the number of characters used. Time-based licenses work on only one computer at a time, but you can install a character-based license on up to 30 computers. I calculate profits for each purchase using server-side scripts. Occasionally I do actually end up paying more for a user than they pay me, but on the whole I make money from time-based licenses. But the danger is real: theoretically, a very hard-working translator on a time-based plan could bankrupt me, and I don’t have a plan for that.

GT4T is also valuable as a free tool. The dictionary, glossary feature, and two MT engines (Yandex and Tencent) are actually free.

Let’s talk about the accessible engines I listed earlier. What I’m missing are engines such as Amazon Translate, SDL BeGlobal, PROMT, and Naver Papago. How do you decide which engines to include, and can users ask you to add engines?

The first thing I consider is translation quality. It seems DeepL and Google excel in quality, and there’s no urgency to add more engines. I seriously consider suggestions from users. Some engines don’t offer API access. I recently added Systran at the request of a user and later removed it because I couldn’t reach an agreement with Systran. I recommended NiuTrans to her and she was happy with it. By the way, NiuTrans is a dark horse that deserves more attention. It performs pretty well, even for European language pairs.

I’m not sure I agree completely. For instance, in the case of Naver Papago (whose engineer we interviewed in the November/December issue), the results are often judged better by Korean users. Amazon also might produce better results in some language combinations. Maybe it would be possible to just add the framework so users can add their own API keys for some engines that are not supported?

Thanks for updating me with this information and recommending Naver Papago and other engines. If they offer API access and I can reach an agreement with them, I’ll certainly add them to GT4T. Users certainly will then be able to use their own API as well.

I always want GT4T to be just a productivity tool, a reference.

Here’s a question about security and privacy. You’re located in China, which might be a concern to some users or their clients. Are requests to the various MT engines actually visible to you and/or do you store that data? Or does your tool just facilitate the connection between the user and the respective MT engine so you don’t actually ever get to the data?

Neither the requests nor the replies from MT servers are visible to me or are being collected. When a user selects some text and presses a GT4T shortcut, the selection is sent directly to the respective MT servers and then the user receives replies from them. GT4T collects the following for licensing purposes: a unique hardware code and the number of characters you submit to MT servers through GT4T. The last time you used GT4T and your IP address are also collected automatically by the GT4T licensing server. They’re actually collected by all websites you visit, and it takes hard work not to collect them.

Any future plans with GT4T that might be interesting for us?

I’m currently working on a new version that does document translation. It will support many file types, including popular CAT file types as well as Microsoft Office types. Users will then be able to translate their documents without having to upload them to a server, and they can even browse a folder and ask GT4T to translate all the files in the folder and subfolders in the background. Your idea of providing suggestions while a user is typing is also helpful. I’ll reevaluate it and other suggestions that you brought up.

As the sole developer of this app, my strength is flexibility, but I also know my limits. Frankly, I’ve been hugely dependent on users’ suggestions and reports for new features, and sometimes even for debugging.

Remember, if you have any ideas and/or suggestions regarding helpful resources or tools you would like to see featured, please e-mail Jost Zetzsche at jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

NOTES
1. You can check out GT4T at https://gt4t.net/en/.
2. API stands for application programming interface, and is the technology that allows different programs to talk with each other (such as Trados or GT4T with Google Translate).
TA introduced continuing education requirements for certification in 2004. Prior to that, ATA certification was a “once-and-done” system, meaning that individuals who passed the exam remained certified as long as they remained ATA members. Introducing continuing education requirements brought the Association more in line with the practices of other credentialing bodies, where it had long been commonplace to require credentialed persons to submit proof of activities and experiences that advance professional development.

In the intervening 16 years, the criteria for earning continuing education points (CEPs) have remained largely static. In a number of cases, the Certification Program manager has fielded requests to award CEPs for activities not explicitly addressed in the original materials on continuing education. Quite a few of these requests have been granted, but the overall structure for awarding CEPs has remained the same.

For that reason, a year ago the Certification Committee created a Continuing Education Task Force to consider changes in the continuing education criteria, so that they might better reflect the realities of today’s translation profession and marketplace. In July 2019, the task force presented its recommendations to the Board, which approved the changes. A few tweaks were subsequently made and approved by the Board when it met during the Annual Conference in Palm Springs. The changes took effect at the beginning of this year.

Here’s a summary of what’s new:

**Exemption for Age 60+:** Previously, certified translators (CTs) were exempted from reporting CEPs once they reached the age of 60. Now, the reporting requirement continues regardless of age. This means that CTs who are 60 years of age or older must submit CE points, but are exempt from paying the recertification fee. This change does not apply to those who already claimed the over 60 exemption in the past, or to those born before January 1, 1963.

**Online Courses:** Previously, conferences, courses, workshops, and seminars on translation and interpreting (whether online or onsite) were reported as Category A (which earns the highest number of points). Now, this applies only to interactive online events. Non-interactive online courses must be reported as Category B (independent study). Proof that an online course was interactive must be submitted to qualify for Category A.

**Other Category A Changes:** Events are capped at no more than five points per day (one hour = one point), or up to 10 points for multi-day events. Previously, it was possible to earn points by reading articles in the ATA Conference Proceedings, but this possibility has now been eliminated.

**Category B (Independent Study):** The maximum reportable points for...
this category has been lowered from 15 points to five points per reporting period. Also, the ATA Independent Study Verification Paper that was already required for each activity must now be accompanied by a statement of how the activity relates to the CT’s professional development.

Category F: This category allowed points for “translating and interpreting work experience involving particularly challenging assignments, allowing the member to expand his/her translation and interpreting capabilities.” The Continuing Education Task Force found this to be especially vague and difficult to verify, so this category has been eliminated.

Category G (Now Category F): This category related to membership in professional associations, allowing one point per membership up to a maximum of four points per reporting period. As of 2020, the maximum per reporting period is three points, and this is limited to associations “related to the translating and interpreting professions, other than ATA.” CTs may also receive CEPs for membership in professional associations related to their work as translators in a specialized field (e.g., law, medicine, and engineering). In addition, proof of membership must be provided for three consecutive years during the reporting period. In the case of specialized fields, a statement of how membership in the association relates to the CT’s work must also be submitted.

Approving Events for Awarding CEPs: In recent years, the Certification Program manager has spent an increasing amount of time processing seemingly frivolous requests for approval to award CEP points for events that have little or nothing to do with translation. To address this situation, the new policy states that any ATA individual or corporate member may apply free of charge to have an activity or event approved for awarding CEPs. Nonmember entities may apply for such approval (for a fee) only if they are nonprofit organizations or educational institutions involved in the translating and interpreting professions. Nonmember for-profit entities may not apply for or receive approval for awarding ATA CEPs.

Nonmembers: In the event that ATA membership is eliminated as a requirement for earning and maintaining certification, nonmember CTs will have to satisfy the same reporting requirements for maintaining certification as member CTs (proof of 20 CEPs every three years). Nonmembers would be required to pay the review fee regardless of age, and the certification renewal fee for nonmember CTs would be higher than that paid by ATA members.

ATA recognizes that because of the three-year reporting period, there may be individuals who planned to claim points for activities that have now been eliminated, or for which the point cap has been lowered. The Certification Program manager (contact caron@atanet.org) is willing to work on a case-by-case basis with anyone who believes they have been unfairly disadvantaged by any of these changes with respect to an upcoming reporting deadline.

On a related note, it has been proposed that an online system for logging certification points be made available to members, so stay tuned for news about that. Finally, see http://bit.ly/ATA-CE-Record for full information about continuing education requirements.

David Stephenson, CT is the chair of ATA’s Certification Committee. An ATA-certified German>English, Dutch>English, and Croatian>English translator, he has been an independent translator for over 30 years, specializing in civil litigation and creative nonfiction. Contact: david@stephensontranslations.com.
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